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UNCLAS MUSCAT 002223

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR NEA/ARP (TROBERTS), NEA/PPD (CWHITTLESEY), NEA/P  
(FFINVER), INR/R/MR  
LONDON FOR GOLDRICH  
PARIS FOR ZEYA  
USCENTCOM FOR PLUSH  
FOREIGN PRESS CENTER/ASILAS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KPAO](#) [KMDR](#) [OIIP](#) [MU](#)

SUBJECT: MUSCAT MEDIA REACTION: CIVIL SOCIETY, FREE SPEECH, U.S.  
HYPOCRISY

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Creating A Civil Society  
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1.The lead editorial in the government-owned Arabic daily "Oman" on December 14 was entitled "NGOs and Civil Society":

"In order for the relationship between governments and nonprofit organizations to be strong, governments must demonstrate respect for human rights, enforce the rule of law, and promote the development of civil society. Since the end of the Cold War, there has been a new impetus to spread democratic principles throughout the world. In the Arab world this has lead to calls for greater tolerance. Some changes have already taken place. For example, phrases like 'open communication', 'reform', and 'political freedom' are now employed in the Arab world. However, Arab societies must do more to create an environment in which civil society can grow. A positive first step would be to implement policies that promote the development of non-profit organizations that support civil society and community involvement. If this is done, Arab societies will clearly be on their way to creating meaningful civil societies."

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The Thin Red Line  
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2. On December 16, "Oman" carried an editorial entitled "The Danger of Silence":

"France's Al-Manar television station, which is owned and operated by Hezbollah, has been silenced. Eutelsat, a French satellite company, has refused to host the station on its carrier. Critics of Eutelsat claim that the French government pressured the company to stop hosting the station because the government felt threatened by the content of the station's reporting. It appears that in the West there is a thin line between what is considered free speech and what is considered dangerous speech. The difference depends on how sensitive the topic is. Other examples of Islamic voices being silenced in the West are mosque imams in Germany, Islamic groups in England, and all of the above in the United States. In America there is a very thin red line between the freedom to lift one's voice in expressing opinions and the risk of losing one's voice completely."

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U.S. Hypocrisy Causes Arab Bankruptcy  
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3. An editorial appeared in the privately owned Arabic daily "Al-Watan" on December 19 entitled "Bankruptcy through Excuses":

"It is hard to take the United States seriously when it claims to stand for freedom of speech and political pluralism, but turns around and applies political pressure on certain media groups to prevent them from expressing their opinions.... This refers to the U.S. role in blocking the broadcasting of Al-Manar television. The U.S. alleges that the station obtains funding from organizations on its terrorist list. Essentially, Al-Manar has been prevented from broadcasting for attempting to obtain funds to finance its daily operation. This incident shows that the America does not practice what it preaches. The U.S. is attempting to silence Arabic media and replace them with its own. This explains the creation of Al-Hurra television and 'Hi' magazine."  
BALTIMORE